THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE WITH ADDITIONAL CHARGE OF THE MINISTRY OF LAW AND JUSTICE (SHRI SUBRAMANIAN SWAMY): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) As the State is presently under President's rule, a decision for holding elections to the Legislative Assembly of Tamil Nadu will be taken at appropriate time, keeping in view the situation obtaining in the State.

Commerce Minister's Meeting with an Israeli Minister

1034. SHRI MURLIDHAR CHANDRAKANT BHANDARE:
SHRI MAHENDRA PRASAD:

Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether during his recent visit to Brussels he had a meeting with an Israel Minister; and

(b) if so, what are re details in this regard?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI SHANTILAL PURUSHOTTAMDAS PATEL): (a) and (b) No official meeting took place between the Indian and Israeli delegation at any level during Commerce Minister's visit to Brussels. However, as the sitting arrangement in international conferences are in alphabetical order and consequently the Indian and Israeli delegation were seated near each other, conversation between the Commerce Minister and his Israeli counterpart was inevitable. We do not maintain any official level contact with Israeli and have no trade issue to discuss with Israel.

Rationalisation of Subsidy System

1035. SHRI MURLIDHAR CHANDRAKANT BHANDARE:
DR. JINENDRA KUMAR JAIN:
SHRI BAL RAM SINGH YADAVA:
SHRI MAHENDRA PRASAD:
SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE:
SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN:

Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether inaugurating a national seminar on employment in New Delhi, on January 14, 1991, he observed that while subsidies were responsible for the mounting budgetary deficit, the whole system of subsidies was geared for the rich;

(b) if so, what steps are being taken/ have been taken to rationalise the system of subsidies to ensure that the benefits of the system reach the poor and marginal farmers; and

(c) how far and in what respects subsidies are proposed to be reduced or withdrawn?

THE FINANCE MINISTER (SHRI YASHWANT SINHA): (a) to (c) As indicated in Para 18 of the speech of the Minister of Finance, while presenting the interim Budget for 1991-92 on 4th March 1991, rationalisation of the expenditure of subsidies is essential for fiscal consolidation. As a first step the budgetary allocations for the major subsidies on exports, fertilizers and food have been reduced from Rs. 9550 crores in RE 1990-91 to Rs. 8616 crores in BE 1991-92. The desired objectives are to be attained within these allocations by better targeting of subsidies for the poor and the needy, combined with an improvement in management.

Excise duty exemption on tractors

1036. SHRI PASUMPON THA. KIRUTTINAN: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether agricultural tractors are exempted form excise duty;

(b) if so, what were the prices of different types of tractors and the extent of excise duty exemption granted during the last three years; and

(c) whether the prices of tractors are fixed by Government; if not, what are the reasons therefor?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE AND THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINIS-